

tanhouse on a gloomy errand, could not at all account for it.

Hodgkins having seated himself with his back to the cupboard, his wife had not seen the cross on his coat, but no sooner did he turn round to pull up the weights of the cuckoo clock, than she cried out, with a shrill voice: "Why, Hodgkins, where have you been? There is a cross on your back a foot long; you have been to the public and some of your drunken companions have played you this trick to make you look like a regular simpleton; come, stand still, and let me rub it off, or every lad in the village will be laughing at you." "Let it alone," said Hodgkins, turning quickly round, "I won't have it rubbed off. Go on mending your stockings, and let my coat alone." "But I won't let it alone," replied his wife; "do you think my husband shall play the fool in that manner? No, that he sha'n't; I'll have every bit of it off before you stir out of the house."

Hodgkins knew very well that his wife was not easily turned when she had once set her mind upon a thing, so striding across the cottage he hastily made his escape, banging the door after him with all his might. "An ill-tempered vixen!" muttered he to himself. "I would have told her of my good luck had she been quiet, but now she shall know nothing about it."

"Halloo, Robert," cried old Fallows, the bricklayer, as Hodgkins turned round the corner, "who has been playing you that trick? why your back is scored all across. Come here, and I will give you a dusting." "Mind your own back, and let mine alone," said Hodgkins surlily, making the best of his way forwards.

"Mr. Hodgkins," cried little Patty Stevens, the huckster's daughter, running after him, "if you please there has somebody been making a long score all down your coat; mother will rub it off for you if you will come back." "You and your mother had better mind your red herrings and treacle," replied Hodgkins, sharply, leaving the little girl wondering why he did not stop to have his coat brushed. No one else noticed the cross on Hodgkins' back till he got near the blacksmith's shop, where the butcher and the blacksmith were talking, the butcher cutting a piece of elder, to make skewers; and the blacksmith, with his arms across, leaning on the half door of

his shop. "You are just the very man I wanted to see," said the butcher, stopping Hodgkins, but before he had spoken a dozen words to him, old Peggy Turton came up in her red cloak and check apron. "Dear me!" cried old Peggy, gathering up her apron in her hand, "why, Mr. Hodgkins, your back is quite a fright; but stand still a moment, and I'll soon have it off." When Hodgkins turned round to tell old Peggy to be quiet, the blacksmith roared out to the butner to "twig Hodgkins' back." "He looks like a walking finger-post," cried the butcher. "Ay, ay," said the blacksmith, "I warrant ye his wife has done that for him, for spending his wages at the Malt Shovel." There was no other method of escaping the check apron of Peggy Turton, and the laughing and jeering of the butcher and blacksmith, than that of getting off the ground as soon as he could; so calling poor Peggy a meddling old hussy, and the other two a brace of grinning fellows, he turned the first corner he came to, feeling the cross on his back a great deal heavier than he expected to find it.

Poor Hodgkins seemed to meet with nothing but ill luck, for just before he got to the school all the scholars ran boisterously into the road, ripe and ready for any kind of fun that could be found. Hodgkins was ill-tempered enough before, but when he saw all the boys hallooing and spreading themselves along the road, he was in a terrible taking, expecting every moment to hear a shout from them on account of the cross on his back. This took place directly after, and fifty young rogues, full of frolic and fun, waving their caps, and following Hodgkins, shouted as loudly as they could bawl, "Look at his back! look at his back!" Hodgkins was in a fury, and would perhaps have done some mischief to his young tormentors had it not been for the sudden appearance of Mr. Johnson, the school-master, who at that moment came out of the school-room.—The boys gave over their hallooing, for Hodgkins directly told Mr. Johnson that they were "an impudent set of young jackanapes, and everlastingly in mischief." Mr. Johnson, who had heard the uproar among the boys, and caught a glimpse of Hodgkins' back, replied, mildly, that he would never encourage any thing like im-